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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AS ENVIRONMENTAL EMISSARY ON PRE-EARTH DAY TRIP
TO PHILIPPINE PROVINCES

¶1. Summary. During a pre-Earth Day trip to the Clark Freeport Zone and Baguio City, the Ambassador focused on environmental issues, U.S. investment in the Philippines, U.S.-Philippine military cooperation, and Filipino cultural heritage. Highlights of the trip included, remarks to the Supreme Court of the Philippines Environmental Justice Forum, the ceremonial switch-on of a solar lighting project, visits to U.S. companies, and remarks to U.S. and Philippine troops preparing for joint military exercises. The Ambassador's trip received positive national and regional coverage in print and broadcast media. End Summary.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROMOTED

¶2. A highlight of the trip was the Supreme Court of the Philippines Forum on Environmental Justice, held at the University of the Cordilleras and simulcast to far-flung locations across the nation, where the Ambassador delivered a message of solidarity and support for the cause of environmental justice. The forum was arranged with assistance from the USG and is part of a comprehensive judicial reform program focused on promoting judicial efficiency, integrity, independence, and broader access to justice, including environmental justice. Efforts in this area include the establishment of 117 environmental courts throughout the Philippines, addressing delays in the resolution of environmental cases, and providing more information about environmental laws. In her remarks, the Ambassador praised the Supreme Court, law enforcement, the military, legislators, and NGOs for working together to promote environmental justice. She also cited the important role that everyone from the Supreme Court to village leaders must play in making laws more effective.

¶3. As part of the build-up to Earth Day 2009, the Ambassador promoted the use of renewable energy in urban settings during a ceremonial switch-on of solar lights in Baguio City's renowned Burnham Park. The solar electrification of Burnham Park's lake was made possible by a partnership - facilitated by USAID - between local and national representatives of the Government of the Philippines, academia, civil society, and the U.S. company SunPower. As part of the ceremony, Ambassador Kenney witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the partners and delivered a message of advocacy for clean, efficient energy, during which she praised Baguio City for "lighting the way" towards mainstreaming the use of renewable energy. The event was covered by regional print and broadcast media.

GREEN U.S. INVESTMENT

¶4. The Ambassador visited U.S. company Texas Instruments' new \$1 billion expansion facility at the Clark Freeport Zone. Despite a soft opening earlier this year due to economic slowdown fears, the plant has begun assembling digital processors for mobile telephone clients and will eventually generate some 3,000 jobs. Its construction features state-of-the-art earthquake resistance technology and many innovative environmental practices, which will be continued in plant operations. The Philippines won the

negotiations for the facility over vying countries China, Thailand, and Vietnam and was chosen because of its quality workforce and Texas Instruments' positive previous experience in the country - its Baguio City plant is one of its most successful sites in the world.

15. The Ambassador also visited Sitel's Baguio City Contact Center where she toured the facility and met with executives and local staff. Sitel has six sites in the Philippines and employs around 11,000 people, with plans to expand further in 2009. The Baguio City facility employs around 3,000 people and services several clients including Hawaiian Air, AT&T, Capital One, and RCN Cable.

MILITARIES STANDING 'SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER'

16. The Ambassador visited Clark Freeport Zone where U.S. and Filipino troops were preparing for the 2009 Balikatan or "shoulder-to-shoulder" joint military exercises. Balikatan 2009 will include community outreach activities, a field training event that will integrate U.S. and Filipino forces, and a command-post simulation which will bring senior leadership together. The Ambassador met with U.S. and Filipino Balikatan 2009 commanders and addressed a combined formation of Philippine Air Force and U.S. Marines personnel. She commended the troops for working in partnership to complete their Balikatan preparations, which will further strengthen U.S.-Philippine military ties as well as provide humanitarian assistance to communities in need.

CULTURAL TIES STRENGTHENED

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17. The Ambassador met with National Artist Benedicto Cabrera and toured his new museum, which showcases selections of the artist's work from the 1960s to the present, as well as his collection of local indigenous artifacts. The Ambassador and Mr. Cabrera discussed local environmental issues and efforts to preserve the arts of indigenous people.

KENNEY